



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Iraq

Iraq – IRQ40499 – Iraqi Communist Party
– Hilla – Textile Industry

6 June 2012

1. Did the communist party have strong support from workers in the tailoring business/textile industry (particularly in the city of Hilla)?

No sources were found directly linking the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) with the Iraqi textile industry. On 10 May 2010, three car bombs exploded outside a textile factory in Hilla, killing at least 45 people and wounding 140; most victims were workers in the factory.¹ Following this incident, the ICP publically condemned the attacks:

The Babil provincial committee of the Iraqi Communist Party issued a statement May 10 sharply condemning the terrorist bombings in several areas of the province, particularly the attack that targeted textile workers in Hilla. It held the criminals of al-Qaeda and remnants of Saddam's Baath party responsible for the attacks.²

Several communist parties around the world followed suit, releasing similar statements of condemnation.³ None of these statements, or any other sources, stated that the textile factory had any affiliation with the ICP. It is possible that the ICP interest in this incident was due to the victims being factory workers – as the ICP website states, 'Iraqi Communists are playing a prominent and a leading role in social struggles, defending the rights of workers and people'.⁴

One source noted that the bombings had a symbolic element, implying that Sunni Arab militants may have attacked the factory because it 'generates employment and income for Shiites'.⁵ Other sources note that the United States Army gave the factory a grant of USD\$2m

¹ 'At least 100 killed in Iraqi violence' 2010, *BBC*, 10 May <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8671823.stm>> Accessed 5 June 2012; Myers, SL, 2010 'Coordinated Attacks in Iraqi Cities Kill More Than 100', *New York Times*, 10 May <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/11/world/middleeast/11iraq.html>> Accessed 5 June 2012

² 'Urgent appeal for solidarity with Iraqi workers', 2010, *People's World*, 20 May <<http://www.peoplesworld.org/urgent-appeal-for-solidarity-with-iraqi-workers/>> Accessed 6 June 2012

³ 'Barbaric Attack on Textile Workers in Iraq', n.d., *Communist Party*, <http://www.communist-party.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=955:the-coordinating-committee-of-cps-in-britain-condemns-barbaric-attack-on-textile-workers-in-hilla-iraq-&catid=127:statements&Itemid=160> Accessed 6 June 2012; 'International Greetings: Iraqi Communist Party', 2010, *Communist Party USA*, 26 May <<http://www.cpusa.org/international-greetings-iraqi-communist-party/>> Accessed 6 June 2012;

Ahmad, S, 2010, 'CP of Pakistan condemns heinous bombing of Iraqi textile factory in Hilla', *Iraqi Letter*, 29 May <<http://iraqiletter.blogspot.com.au/2010/05/cp-of-pakistan-condemns-heinous-bombing.html>> Accessed 6 June 2012

⁴ Iraqi Communist Party 2010, *History of Struggle for Free Homeland & Prosperous People*, 28 November <<http://english.iraqicp.com/history/48-history-of-struggle-for-qfree-homeland-a-prosperous-people.html>> Accessed 4 June 2012

⁵ Cole, J, 2010, 'Iraq Death Toll from Attacks rises to 119, Biggest since Start of Year', *Informed Comment*, 11 May <<http://www.juancole.com/2010/05/iraq-death-toll-from-attacks-rises-to-119-biggest-since-start-of-year.html>> Accessed 6 June 2012

in 2007 for the purchasing of machinery and maintenance⁶, and that renovations paid for by the United States were completed the year before the bombings.⁷

Few reports were found of the ICP's presence in Hilla. The ICP website lists an article about a series of May Day demonstrations it organised in 2012. The largest demonstration was in Baghdad, but there was also a demonstration held in Hilla.⁸ Information was found about organised workers' rights activities by the textile industry in Hilla. One report, published by the ICP magazine *Tariq Al Shaab*, states:

Hundreds of workers and employees of the Public Company of Textile Industries in Hilla organised a strike on 9 October 2008, and demonstrated outside the company. They called for improving their living conditions, and demanded the payment of their wages in accordance with the new salary pay scale.⁹

A 2011 article published on the General Federation of Iraqi Workers' website reports on a demonstration by workers at the Hilla Textile Factory who were 'demanding re-payment of their overdue salaries'.¹⁰ Neither report states that the demonstrations were organised by or affiliated with the ICP.

2. Was the textile industry in Hilla the crucible of early support for the Communist Party in Iraq?

One source was located stating that the ICP drew support from Hilla, among other areas of Iraq, in the 1940s and 50s. No reports specifically identify the textile industry as being the crucible of early support for the ICP.

The ICP was formed in the mid-1930s¹¹, and was initially made up of communists from Baghdad, Basra and Nasiriyya.¹² In the 1940s its popularity grew and it began to draw support from Iraqis in Hilla, Muntafiq, Amara and Basra¹³, as well as urban Shi'a communities and Kurds.¹⁴ By the late 1950s its membership had increased to 25,000, and it began to take control over the students', women's, youth and professional unions,

⁶ Kilbride, T & Miles, D, 2007 'Army Assists in Reinvigorating Iraq's Economy', *U.S. Army*, 15 August <<http://www.army.mil/article/4428/army-assists-in-reinvigorating-iraqs-economy/>> Accessed 4 June 2012; Gimbel, B, 2007, 'In Iraq, one man's Mission Impossible', *CNN Money*, 4 September

<http://money.cnn.com/2007/08/31/magazines/fortune/iraq_inc.fortune/index.htm> Accessed 4 June 2012

⁷ Myers, SL, 2010 'Coordinated Attacks in Iraqi Cities Kill More Than 100', *New York Times*, 10 May

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/11/world/middleeast/11iraq.html>> Accessed 5 June 2012

⁸ Communist Party of Iraq 2012, *Baghdad's May Day march draws thousands*, 3 May

<<http://english.iraqicp.com/actual/107-baghdads-may-day-march-draws-thousands.html>> Accessed 4 June 2012

⁹ 'Workers of Hilla Textiles Company Go on Strilke', 2008, *Iraqi Letter*, 15 October <<http://iraqiletter.blogspot.com.au/2008/10/workers-of-hilla-textiles-company-go-on.html>> Accessed 5 June 2012

¹⁰ 'Leather products and textile workers held a day of protest in Baghdad and Hilla', 2011, *General Federation of Iraqi Workers*, 2 February <<http://www.iraqitradeunions.org/wordpress/?p=1880>> Accessed 6 June 2012

¹¹ Iraqi Communist Party 2010, *History of Struggle for Free Homeland & Prosperous People*, 28 November <<http://english.iraqicp.com/history/48-history-of-struggle-for-qfree-homeland-a-prosperous-people.html>> Accessed 4 June 2012; 'Iraq's major political groupings', nd, *MiddleEastReference.org*

<<http://middleeastreference.org.uk/iraqiopposition.html>> Accessed 17 May 2005

¹² 'Iraq's major political groupings', nd, *MiddleEastReference.org*

<<http://middleeastreference.org.uk/iraqiopposition.html>> Accessed 17 May 2005

¹³ Nakash, Y, 2003, *The Shi'Is of Iraq*, Princeton University Press, Google Books, p.132

<<http://books.google.com.au/books?id=BXJqeTr6p78C&lpg=PA132&dq=Iraqi%20Communism%20hilla&pg=PA132#v=onepage&q=Iraqi%20Communism%20hilla&f=false>> Accessed 6 June 2012

¹⁴ 'Iraq's major political groupings', nd, *MiddleEastReference.org*

<<http://middleeastreference.org.uk/iraqiopposition.html>> Accessed 17 May 2005

broadcasting facilities, newspapers and courts.¹⁵ The ICP website states that in the 1940s and 50s the 'ICP was a leading force in... organising workers' unions'.¹⁶

The secretary-general of the ICP, Hamid Majid Musa Al-Bayyati, was born in Hilla. He was elected the secretary-general in 1993 while he was living in Iraqi Kurdistan.¹⁷

3. Were tailors/textile workers in Hilla actively recruited by the communist party?

No information was located about ICP recruitment in the Hilla textile industry.¹⁸

¹⁵ 'Iraq's major political groupings', nd, *MiddleEastReference.org*

<<http://middleeastreference.org.uk/iraqiopposition.html>> Accessed 17 May 2005

¹⁶ Iraqi Communist Party 2010, *History of Struggle for Free Homeland & Prosperous People*, 28 November

<<http://english.iraqicp.com/history/48-history-of-struggle-for-qfree-homeland-a-prosperous-people.html>> Accessed 4 June 2012

¹⁷ Ghareeb, E & Dougherty, B, 2004, *Historical Dictionary of Iraq*, Scarecrow Press, Google Books, p.47

<<http://books.google.com.au/books?id=RIB5qT9sGnwC&lpg=PA47&dq=Iraqi%20Communism%20hilla&pg=PA47#v=onepage&q=Iraqi%20Communism%20hilla&f=false>> Accessed 6 June 2012

¹⁸ Searches were conducted of news websites, communist party websites, general internet searches, RRT Country Advice holdings (ISYS and Iraq Country Portal), CISNET, NGO and refugee websites (Refworld).

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<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8671823.stm>> Accessed 5 June 2012
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